

Kehillah

#56



THE PERTINENT PARASHA

Hashem Shall Fight for You

Rabbi Yeshoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

The very first war the Jewish nation has to fight is the war against Amalek: "Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim" (*Shemos* 17:8). In our moment of weakness, "and you were tired and weary" (*Devarim* 25:18), Amalek attacked us "on the way" and sought to prevent us from continuing our track to the destiny of the Promised Land.

The war was ultimately won. "Yehoshua weakened Amalek and its people with the sword's blade" (*Shemos* 17:13). However, the unique element of the war is the hands of Moshe: "It happened that when Moshe raises his hand Israel was stronger, and when he lowered his hand Amalek was stronger" (17:11).

Why did this have to be an integral part of the war against Amalek? And what does it teach us for future wars, including the present campaign against our enemies?

Parashas Beshalach begins with the war of Hashem against Egypt – "For Hashem fights for them in Egypt" (14:25) – and ends with the war of Hashem against Amalek – "Hashem maintains a war against Amalek, from generation to generation" (17:16). However, the nature of the two wars is entirely different.

What does the war against Amalek teach us for future wars, including the present campaign against our enemies?

The war against Egypt at the sea, which was part and parcel of our redemption from Egyptian exile, was fought singlehandedly by Hashem. There was no need for human intervention or initiative. "Hashem shall fight for you, and you shall remain silent" (*Shemos* 14:12).





THE PERTINENT PARASHA



By contrast, the war against Amalek heralded the onset of a new era in which the Jewish people would have to fight their own wars. The full challenge of navigating the hurdles of nature would only kick in after entry into the land. Amalek, however, among the nations of Canaan (the Torah tells us that Amalek inhabited the Negev in the south), made a preemptive strike against us and gave us a taste of things to come.

Miracles would not set the tone for these wars. They would be subject to the ways of the world, the ways of war that exact harsh costs. Soldiers would die and be wounded; some days would bring victories and others, losses. Yehoshua, rather than Moshe, would lead the charge.

And yet, Hashem is a part of them. This is the crucial representation of Moshe's hands, raised above to indicate Hashem's presence in the war camp. The section concludes with a reference to "the hand on the throne of God" (17:16), which Rashi explains as Hashem's hand lifted in oath of eternal war against Amalek.

In other words, the hand of Moshe is itself the divine hand that fights the Jewish people's war against evil.

When Moshe's hands were raised, we were victorious, because Hashem was with us; when they were lowered, we were struck by the enemy.

Two basic lessons emerge. One is that the same God that fought our battle against Egypt continues forever to fight the Jewish wars – only that in Egypt the matter was explicit and revealed while for all generations it is hidden and concealed. We fight the physical war, adhering to natural principles, while Hashem grants us our victory on a supernatural level.

The second is that introducing the elevated level of Hashem's presence depends on us. We need Moshe, Aharon, and Chur – the prophet, the *Kohen Gadol*, and Chur, who represents the lineage of kings – to stand atop the mountain and ensure that Hashem is among us.

As we continue to fight our present campaign, these lessons must be forever on our minds. On the one hand, we fight a natural war and must do all we can in terms of strategy, technology, and combat. On the other, Hashem fights our wars. Without Him, we cannot win.



Heroism

Rabbi Yaacov Haber – Rav of Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Ramat Beit Shemesh

Some Talmudic history: When Rav Yehudah Hanasi died, his son suggested that Rabbi Chanina become the new leader of Klal Yisrael. Rabbi Chanina declined. He knew that he had qualified colleagues that had their heart set on the top job. The last thing he wanted to do was to cause grief to a *talmid chacham*. Rabbi Chanina took the third position in Klal Yisrael.

Rabbi Chanina ended up living very long. He often expressed that he wasn't sure why he had merited such longevity. He told his students that there were two possibilities. Either it was because he gave up a career of great honor so as not to hurt a colleague. Or because he was once traveling from Teverya to Tzipori and he made a detour in his route to give shalom to Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta. One of the two, he said, has given him longevity (*Koheles Rabba* 7:7).

Amazing. A tzaddik looks back at the entire panorama of his life, reminiscing about the milestones

that made an everlasting impression on his heart and the hearts of others. He wonders why he was lucky enough to live to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow up. Two episodes come to mind. There were only two incidents that could bring such merit. Was it his historic act of heroism, humbleness, selflessness, and honor for Torah? After all, he gave up the highest, most

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prestigious job for the sake of another Jew! Or was it the six-hour detour he took on his trip from Teverya to give honor to Rabbi Shimon?

What was his question? How could the two be compared, equated, or even remembered at the same time? How could he doubt which of the two have earned him long years?





Hashkafically Speaking



The answer is that this world is not built on heroism; it is built on the everyday acts of goodness that come up every hour of every day. It's not jumping into fire; it's calling your mother. It's not fasting for weeks on end; it's sharing your food with someone who has less.

It's not making speeches before thousands; it's saying hello to someone who most people ignore. No one throws ticker tape on the man who chose to be faithful to his wife, on the lawyer who didn't take the drug money, or on the daughter who held her tongue again and again. All these acts of anonymous heroism are the healthy ingredients of this world. These are the things that *olam haba* is made of.

Everyone wants to be a hero. Less people are willing to do the simple, everyday, unnoticeable, non-dramatic acts of being a mensch.

The Midrash says the Jewish nation arrived at the banks of the Sea of Reeds and started to fight. Each tribe wanted to be the first to jump in. Meanwhile, Nachshon ben Aminadav, followed by the tribe of Binyamin, entered the sea. The tribe of Yehuda watched the tribe of Binyamin walk into the water and started to pelt them with stones. Said Rabbi Meir – Because Binyamin

walked into the water first, they were honored that Jerusalem will be in their portion of Eretz Yisrael (*Sota* 36b).

Because the tribe of Yehuda threw stones they became the kings of Israel (*Tosafos, ibid.*).

This world is built not on heroism but on the everyday acts of goodness that come up every hour of every day.

We understand Binyamin and we understand their reward. While everyone was arguing they jumped in. They were heroes. They took the bull by the horns. They split the sea! What did Yehuda do that was right? What did Yehuda do that deserved royalty?

The answer is that while the tribe of Binyamin was rewarded for jumping, the tribe of Yehuda was rewarded for not jumping. There was a reason for argument. There were questions of history, philosophy, maybe even Kabbala. The tribe of Yehuda said, "Don't jump so fast. Let's do the right thing, even if it's not as glitzy as the others." This maturity and selflessness earned the tribe of Yehuda royalty.





Chok U'Mishpat

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

Immediately after crossing the Sea of Reeds and singing *Shiras Hayam*, Moshe led the people for three days in the desert without water, until they reached Mara. In Mara there was water but it was bitter. A single concise verse then describes several events at Mara (*Shemos* 15:25): the people cried to Hashem; Hashem instructed them regarding a certain kind of wood; Moshe threw this wood into the water, and the water became sweet (drinkable); and finally, “there He established for them *chok u'mishpat* (law and rule), and there He tried them.”

The last part of the verse is rather cryptic. What do the words *chok u'mishpat* refer to? The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (56b) cites one tannaitic opinion that Hashem gave a few of the mitzvos to the Jewish people at Mara prior to giving them the entire Torah at Mount Sinai. This is the explanation given by Rashi.

The Ramban duly acknowledges this approach, but he suggests another interpretation for the plain meaning of the verse. He says that the expression used for the instruction at Mara is quite different from those used everywhere else in

in the Torah for giving specific mitzvos. The Ramban proposes instead that the term *chok u'mishpat* mentioned in the verse refers to useful, practical rules for public conduct in the desert. (These would correspond closely to “general orders” in the army, orders that apply in the absence of any specific order from a commander.)

The Ramban points out that the expression used for the instruction at Mara is quite different from the expressions used everywhere else in the Torah for giving specific mitzvos.

The Ramban points out that the same expression appears in *sefer Yehoshua* (24:25): Yehoshua made a covenant with the people, and established for them *chok u'mishpat*. *Chazal* learned that this refers to specific legislation that Yehoshua instituted. (These rules were discussed in the *Daf Yomi* this past week.) The Ramban describes these as “conduct of settlements and countries.”



We can add that the expression *chok u'mishpat* refers elsewhere (I *Shmuel* 30:25) to David's instruction to divide the spoils of war on an equal basis between the combat soldiers and those with other tasks. Both uses of the expression clearly refer to practical instructions rather than fundamental and eternal commandments. (Though in *Ezra* 7:10 the expression seems to refer to the *Torah Shebe'al Peh*.)

It was necessary to include in the Torah a general commandment to regulate our conduct in a just way, even where no specific Torah mitzva applies.

The Ramban refers to the rectification of "settlement and countries" in two other places. In *Devarim* 4 the Torah informs us that its laws are perceived as wisdom and insight among the nations; the Ramban (*Devarim* 4:5) explains that among other things, the mitzvos are appropriate and just for "settlement

of peoples and countries." And regarding the commandment "Do what is right and good in the eyes of Hashem" (*Devarim* 6:18), the Ramban explains that any finite set of laws will fall short of providing all the guidance necessary for rectifying all "settlements and countries"; thus it was necessary to include in the Torah a general commandment to regulate our conduct in a just way, even where no specific Torah mitzva applies.

The eternal laws of the Torah are the foundation of our communal conduct as Jews, just as they are the foundation of our individual conduct. They are indeed suited for the "settlement of peoples and countries" - not only supernaturally, but also naturally.

But we learn from the Ramban that there is always a need for additional rules and regulations that are adapted to the unique circumstances of any society. The needs of the people in the desert under Moshe were different from their needs in Egypt under Pharaoh; those needs in Eretz Yisrael under Yehoshua and his successors were different yet.



Immediately after the story of Mara we find the story of the manna, the miraculous bread from heaven which nourished our people for forty years in the desert. The normal situation envisioned by the Creator is that human beings work for their livelihood themselves; that's why the manna stopped falling as soon as the people entered Eretz Yisrael where we returned to a natural existence. The era of miraculous nourishment in the desert reminds us first of all that Hashem cares about our mundane needs, and it also reminds us that even our seeming self-sufficiency is ultimately an expression of His providence.

Likewise in the case of *chok u'mishpat*, the normal situation is that human societies themselves evaluate their unique circumstances and establish useful, practical principles for society. That's why Yehoshua

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instituted his many "stipulations" sometime after the people entered Eretz Yisrael.

But according to the Ramban, at the very beginning of the sojourn in the desert, even these mundane, practical guidelines descended from heaven directly from Hashem. The corresponding message is that ideally, even the laws we make for ourselves, for our states and towns, our apartment buildings and our shuls, can equally be seen as the continuation of a miraculous precedent and an expression of Hashem's providence.



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

How does the *Segula* of *Parashas Hamann* Work?

Rabbi Tzvi Broker
Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

Many of us recited *parashas hamann* this past week as a *segula* for *parnassa*, livelihood. What are the mechanics behind this *segula*? Is simply reciting some verses enough?

The source for the connection between *parashas hamann* and *parnassa* is found in the *Yerushalmi* in *Berachos*: "Whoever recites *parashas hamann* every day will not lack in their *parnassa*." This gemara is brought by the *Mishna Berura* (*Orach Chaim* 1), where it says that the goal of reciting *parashas hamann* is to internalize that all of our livelihood comes through *hashgacha pratis*, as it was with Bnei Yisrael in the desert. Even though some collected less manna and some more, everyone ended up with the exact omer measurement that Hashem decreed for each person. The *Mishna Berura* emphasizes that this highlights that making excessive efforts will not add to one's earnings.

How is this lesson practically relevant in our lives? Does this mean that if you choose to work only one hour a day instead of eight you'll end up with the same income at the end of the month?

The question of how much effort each person should make is a delicate one. As mentioned in several sources, we are required to make the normal amount of effort for our livelihood.

Reading *parashas hamann* is an exercise in developing *bitachon* and ensuring that our sense of safety is from Hashem alone.

So where does the lesson of the manna come into play? This can be seen in our internal state of being when making our efforts and especially when facing a financial challenge. Do we act with an inner calmness or with panic and an attempt to gain control?



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH



This is the barometer of how much we're internalizing the message of *parashas hamann*. When we've internalized that Hashem is the true provider of our needs, we're able to feel safe under His protection, which is the experience of *bitachon*.

Cultivating a true sense of *bitachon* is the driving force *behind parashas hamann*. Because we're required to be consistently involved in our own efforts, it's natural to get our sense

of safety from them. As you read *parashas hamann* this Shabbos, consider from where you get your own sense of safety regarding your finances. Use this as an opportunity to daven that you will be able to instill within yourself a genuine sense of *bitachon* in Hashem. You will then benefit from a more authentic relationship with Him and access the blessings of a good *parnassa* that come along with having *bitachon*.



Lending in Foreign Currency in accordance with Halacha

Rabbi Shloimy Muller

Talmid of Rav Pinchas Vind *shlita*, founder of the Beis Horaah L'inyanei Ribbis

Last week we raised the issue of lending in foreign currency. This is particularly relevant to those of us living in Eretz Yisrael who may occasionally lend or borrow in dollars or other currencies.

We explained that a loan in a foreign currency is halachically forbidden and can result in losses for the lender if the currency's value rises with respect to the shekel, so that when the loan is repaid the dollar is worth more than it was at the time that the loan commenced.

Unfortunately, this halacha is relatively unknown, probably since it applies only to foreign currency, which by its very nature is uncommon. However, in today's global village, where distant countries are just a few hours away by plane, lending in foreign currency is more relevant than ever, especially for those who have moved from their countries of origin.

How can one who is living in Eretz Yisrael lend or borrow dollars in accordance with halacha? How can the lender be sure that he will not lose out (i.e., that the borrower will be able

to return the full amount of the loan)?

Although there are several ways to permit this loan, the option that will also prevent the lender from losing money is by making sure that the borrower owns some of the currency being borrowed. Practically speaking, this means that if one is asked to lend dollars, one must ask the borrower if he owns at least one dollar. Assuming the answer is yes, then one may lend him the money.

How does this work? If the borrower himself owns some of the currency, then as soon as the loan goes into effect, the foreign currency he owns (which he also borrowed in) is designated for his lender as eventual repayment. It therefore is considered as if the lender owns that money. And so we are no longer concerned about the currency's rising value, because the borrower will not be returning his own money to the lender; rather, he'll be giving back what belonged to the lender the whole time.

We will expand on this matter next week, *be'ezras Hashem*.



The Satmar Rebbe

Rabbi Dov Loketch – Rabbi of Agudas Yisrael Mogen Avraham, Detroit

This week we'll begin to look at the life of one of the great Chassidic Rebbes of the last century, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe.

Recollections of the Satmar Rebbe

When I was eleven years old, my father decided that despite my young age, the time had come for me to leave Boston and learn in New York. I wasn't doing all that well in school, and my father saw the troubles that other immigrant families in Boston were having with their children, many of whom had grown lax or disinterested in Yiddishkeit. He figured I would benefit spiritually and educationally by learning in a strong yeshiva environment in New York, so he sent me off and enrolled me in Yeshiva Torah Vodaath.

During those four years in New York, I had several special opportunities, including being exposed to luminaries such as Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, Rav Moshe Wolfson, and Rav Gedaliah Schorr.

One particularly memorable experience I had in those years was attending a *tisch* of the Satmar Rebbe.

The yeshiva back then was in Williamsburg, and on Friday night,

after we ate at the homes of different families, my friends and I would meet at a certain street corner and then decide which *tischen* to attend. Over the course of those years we attended numerous *tischen*, enabling us to experience a kind of Yiddishkeit and spirituality which we would otherwise never be exposed to.

One Friday night we went to the *tisch* of the Satmar Rebbe in the Yetev Lev Shul on Bedford Avenue. Nearly sixty years later, the image of the Rebbe clad in his white *tisch chalat* and white *gartel* and unique *shtreimel*, wrapped in a tallis and standing like an angel, is still emblazoned in my memory. I can still hear the beautiful *nusach* of "Shalom Aleichem" and Kiddush, and I can still picture him slicing the fish. I would later discover that while slicing the fish, the Rebbe had special *kavanos* (intentions) related to the kabbalistic themes of the Friday night meal. The room was filled with hundreds of Chassidim, some of whom shed tears during the emotional singing of *zemiros*.



BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

There was one other occasion when I had the opportunity to hear the Satmar Rebbe – at the *levaya* of Rav Aharon Kotler.

When Rav Aharon passed away in 1962, our entire yeshiva was bused to the East Side for the *levaya*. We were part of an enormous crowd that gathered to pay respects to one of the great pioneers of Torah in America. Thousands of people attended.

The Satmar Rebbe delivered what would become a famous *hesped* for Rav Aharon Kotler. He noted the verse in *Parashas Behaalosecha* about Aharon's compliance with the mitzva to kindle the menorah – *Vayaas ken Aharon, "Aharon did so"* (*Bamidbar* 8:3). Rashi famously comments, *Lehaggid shivcho shelo shina*. The Torah emphasizes Aharon's compliance in order to praise him for not deviating from the commands given to him.

The Rebbe said that everyone must praise Rav Aharon, *shelo shina*, for not changing anything from the *Alter Heim*. He brought to these shores precisely the *masora* that he had learned and taught in Kletzk with his father-in-law, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. He built the entire

yeshiva in Lakewood without any deviation from the traditions followed in Europe.

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The Rise of a Chassidic Leader

The Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, was born in 1887 in the town of Sighet, which is situated along the border between Hungary and Romania. His father, Rav Chananiah Yom Tov Teitelbaum, held all three leadership positions in Sighet, serving as the community's *rav*, *rosh yeshiva*, and Rebbe. Rav Chananiah Yom Tov was the son of the Yetev Lev, Rav Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum, and a great-grandson of the Yismach Moshe, Rav Moshe Teitelbaum of Ujhel, who is credited with bringing Chassidus to Hungary. Initially a *misnaged* (opponent of Chassidus), the Yismach Moshe was introduced to the Chozeh of Lublin and became a devoted Chassid.

Rav Yoel was never appointed to any position in his hometown of Sighet.





BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

Even after his father's passing, his older brother inherited the positions of leadership. Nevertheless, he attracted a following in the town, receiving *pidyonos* (money for charity in exchange for blessings) and giving *berachos*. He also gained a reputation for his outstanding scholarship in both halacha and Chassidus.

After serving as rav in several communities, he moved to the nearby town of Satmar in 1934, where he established himself as the rav, *rosh yeshiva*, and Rebbe.

One of the prominent supporters of the Satmar Rebbe at that time was Henry Feuerstein, founder of the New England-based Malden Mills Industries. Henry grew up in Hungary and later emigrated to the States. He generously supported Satmar's institutions before World War II.

Rav Yoel followed the policy of Hungarian rabbanim to oppose even the slightest modifications to accommodate modern trends. Like other leading Hungarian Chassidic leaders such as the Rebbe of Munkatch, the Satmar Rebbe fiercely rejected not only Zionism, but also the newly formed Agudas

Yisrael movement, which they saw as taking a compromising stance toward modern secularist movements.

The king explained that he felt moved by the sight of the Satmar Rebbe the moment their eyes met.

The Rebbe was an especially charismatic figure who had a striking appearance. When Romania's King Carol II made a visit to the town of Satmar in 1936, he was greeted by all the town's leaders, including its religious leaders. All faiths, and the various Jewish streams, were represented. But when the king came in and saw the group of leaders, he went over specifically to the Satmar Rebbe, who was standing in the middle of the line, to shake his hand. The Rebbe proceeded to give the king a *beracha*. When the king was asked why he singled out the Satmar Rebbe, he explained that he felt moved by the sight of the Rebbe the moment their eyes met. This exchange was captured by a photographer who was present at the event.





Choosing to Be Your Better Self

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*

I have the power to make life as meaningful as I choose. When I implement choice as a fundamental practice, I am freed of the inevitability of where life will take me. I can reassess every aspect of my life, from my responses to my career, and I can switch out every mundane decision and replace it with a meaningful one.

The mechanism of choice works as follows: We constantly find opposing forces within us in conflict. You wake up in the morning, and part of you wants to get up and have a productive day. It's opposed by the part of you that wants to sleep in. You've heard a piece of juicy gossip. Part of you can't wait to spill the beans and part of you wants to be the bigger person and keep it to yourself. These two sides of you battle it out until one of them emerges the victor.

Sometimes the right choice is simple to identify because it's a clear-cut case of your higher self versus your lower self. You may give in to your lower self, but you know you should not. Every time you

make a choice in line with your values or your higher moral outlook, you are making a good choice imbued with spirituality, because it is one step closer to becoming your better self. Sometimes you will find that the choice is between two of your values, and that can be a little trickier. It may help to know your hierarchy of values so you can assess which value is more meaningful to you.

Choice allows us to change the trajectory of our life. It gives us authorship over our lives. It is not always found in the realm of action, but we always have the choice of how to react. It helps us climb out of the pit of our circumstance and take responsibility, the better replacement for excuses; to find moral alternatives, the better replacement for animal instinct; to practice gratitude, the better replacement for self-pity; to care for others, the better placement for self-centeredness; to exercise effort, the better replacement for comfort. Choice invites opportunity. It determines who we become.



Choice is threatened by compulsion, complacency, and comfort seeking, but choice is always our prerogative. The choice to give, to grow, to get help, to amend, to rejoice, to disengage from negative influence or behavior, to surrender, to see the positive, to make a change. To understand that there are always at least two ways to interact with a situation and to know that while the situation itself may be out of our control, our relationship with it depends on our choice.

You cannot choose how others behave, but you can choose how to respond to them.

How rich our life feels, how developed we become, how much meaning we attain, and the quality and quantity of our contribution depend upon our choosing.

Action Steps

- In any situation, avoid the rote response by identifying your choices.
- Where you don't feel you have a choice as to whether to do something, remember that you usually have the choice as to how to do it.
- If you feel you made the wrong choice in the moment, go back to the scenario in your mind later on and play out which choice you would have liked to make.
- When people around you are being difficult, see if you can view them with compassion instead of frustration.
- Be aware that you cannot choose how others behave, but you can choose how to respond to them.
- Try making a different choice in a small area where you have always made the same choice to feel the pleasure and possibility of alternative choices.
- Notice which mechanisms in your psychology are at play or which beliefs are dictating to you when making the wrong choices.
- Do not expect to make the right choice every time, but take responsibility for it, because the choice you made was your choice.
- If you know which choice you should make but you are having difficulty making it, ask Hashem to help you find the courage.
- If you don't know which choice to make, ask Hashem for clarity.



Learning Out Loud

Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story

Boaz was sitting at the dining room table reviewing his Torah homework by reading the verses out loud. His sister Tamar brought her geography homework to the table as well and set up her books to study for her upcoming test.

"Boaz, can you please *not* do your homework out loud?" she asked. "It's hard for me to memorize the continents and oceans of the world with your loud babbling."

"This is *not* babbling! It's Torah!" exclaimed Boaz. "And it's the way we learn it in class. All the students and our rabbi recite it together out loud."

Tamar sighed. "Fine. But that's a class thing. It's not like a rule that you're supposed to do at home, right?"

"Well, whenever you see people learning in a *beis midrash* or shul, they're usually reading out loud."

"But that's not fair. What if I start reciting out loud these lists of lakes and oceans that I'm learning? Wouldn't that bother you?"

Boaz hesitated. "Yeah. I guess. I just think that Torah homework might be different."

Discussion

Q: Who do you think is right?

A: Boaz is correct. Though it isn't kind to disturb his sister's studying, it's actually important to learn out loud. Rambam writes that if a person can hear his voice during his time of learning, then he will remember what he learned. If, however, a person reads silently, then he will quickly forget what he learned (*Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:12).

Doeg HaEdomi was a brilliant *talmid chacham* who was the head of the Sanhedrin. Unfortunately, he turned to evil ways and betrayed the *Kohanim* of the city Nov. How could someone who knew so much Torah do something so evil? The Gemara explains that Doeg's way of learning Torah was wrong (*Sanhedrin* 106b). One of his flaws was that he did not learn Torah out loud (Maharsha on *Sanhedrin* 106b).



PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Q: What is the connection between our story and the *parasha*?

A: In the fourth *aliya* of the *parasha*, while Bnei Yisrael were at Mara, the Jews were told the importance of listening to Hashem. The Torah uses the words *vehaazanta lemitzvotav*, which literally means “you should listen to His mitzvos” (Shemos 15:26). From this phrase the *chachamim* learned that it is very important for a person to hear his own voice when he learns Torah (Midrash, *Torah Sheleima*). In order to use our ears when we’re learning, we have to say the words out loud.

Q: Must a person always learn out loud?

A: No. Sometimes, it is more beneficial for a person's understanding to think silently about what he is learning so that he understands it better and it sinks in. According to the Vilna Gaon this is fully considered Torah study.

Back to the Story

Once Boaz clarified with his teacher the importance of learning his Torah homework by saying the words out loud, he came home to tell Tamar. They made a rule about studying together at the dining room table. They would review their work in a way that they could hear themselves but hopefully not disturb each other. Many evenings, the two of them could be seen at the table, in front of their textbooks, whispering to themselves whether they were reciting verses or the names of the Great Lakes of North America.



*Written in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, le'iluy nishmas Frumit bat Yosef.
Based on the writing of Rabbi Yechiel Michal Stern in his work Chamisha Chumshei
Torah im Midrash Halacha, Shemos 15:26.*



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